



December 17, 2022

Acting Co-CEOs Lloyd Duncan and Sarah Garcia
North Idaho College
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

Dear Acting CEOs Duncan and Garcia:

In its letter dated April 1, 2022, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) informed North Idaho College (NIC) that it had placed the institution on a *Sanction of Warning* and a *Status of Monitoring*.

While NIC has submitted monitoring reports as required since that time, hired a new president, and has a fully constituted Board with five Trustees, recent and subsequent public actions of the NIC Board of Trustees appear to place the institution at significant risk of being out of compliance with a number of NWCCU Eligibility Requirements and Standards.

The NWCCU Executive Committee met on December 16, 2022 to discuss recent actions of NIC's Board of Trustees. The Commission is concerned that NIC is, or appears to be, out of compliance with the following NWCCU [Eligibility Requirements](#) and [Standards for Accreditation](#):

Eligibility Requirements

- 2. OPERATIONAL FOCUS AND INDEPENDENCE: The institution's programs and services are predominantly concerned with higher education. The institution has sufficient organizational and operational independence to be held accountable and responsible for meeting and sustaining NWCCU's Standards for Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements.*
- 8. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY: The institution establishes and adheres to ethical standards in all of its academic programs, operations, and relationships.*
- 9. GOVERNING BOARD: The institution has a functioning governing board(s) responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for each college/unit within a multiple-unit district or system, to ensure that the institution's mission is being achieved. The governing board(s) has at least five voting members, a majority of whom have no contractual or employment relationship or personal financial interest with the institution. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities, shall have, with respect to such boards, clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities in a written contract(s). In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated, in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides NWCCU accredited institutions with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.*
- 10. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose full-time responsibility is to the institution. The chief executive officer may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as chair.*

11. *ADMINISTRATION: In addition to a chief executive officer, the institution employs a sufficient number of qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability, who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness. Such administrators provide effective leadership and management for the institution's major support and operational functions and work collaboratively across institutional functions and units to foster fulfillment of the institution's mission. Executive officers may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as chair.*
22. *RELATIONSHIP WITH NWCCU: The institution understands and accepts the Standards and policies of NWCCU and agrees to comply with these Standards and policies. Further, the institution agrees that NWCCU may, at its sole discretion, make known the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding the institution's status with NWCCU to any agency or member of the public requesting such information.*

Standards for Accreditation

2. *Preamble. The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.*
- 2.A.1 *The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.*
- 2.A.2 *The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.*
- 2.A.3 *The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.*
- 2.A.4 *The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.*
- 2.D.2 *The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff,*

and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

2.D.3 The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff. 2.F.1 Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. 2.F.3 Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

“Show Cause”

When the Commission finds that an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to address identified concerns or when an institution is found to be in serious non-compliance with the Commission’s accreditation criteria, it may require the institution to show-cause as to why its candidacy or accreditation should not be terminated. In such cases, the burden rests with the institution to demonstrate why its candidacy or accreditation should be continued.

Per NWCCU Accreditation Actions Policy

*NWCCU may require an accredited or candidate institution to **show cause** and note its accreditation is in jeopardy, when it does not appear to be in compliance with Standards for Accreditation, Eligibility Requirements, Policies, or applicable federal regulations, and there is evidence the non-compliance is sufficiently egregious such that it raises concerns the institution: has not made sufficient progress toward achieving compliance; does not appear to demonstrate capacity to comply with Standards for Accreditation, Eligibility Requirements, Policies, or applicable federal regulations under a timeframe set by the Commission pursuant to 34 CFR § 602.20(a)(2); is in imminent danger of closing; has demonstrated a lack of integrity, truthfulness, or responsibility, and the Commission determines students may be harmed; or information from monitoring activities suggests serious concerns related to student achievement, viability and capacity, or financial health.*

In light of the above, NWCCU requires NIC to provide a response to this letter, no later than close of business, Pacific Standard Time, January 4, 2023, describing how the institution is not out of compliance with each Eligibility Requirement and Standard for Accreditation identified above.

The institution is reminded that membership in the NWCCU is voluntary and that a fundamental assumption of the Commission is that its member institutions willingly seek to maintain compliance with Commission Bylaws, Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies.



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Failure to adequately respond in the timeline identified may result in further actions by NWCCU's Executive Committee and/or the Board of Commissioners that will place the accreditation status of North Idaho College at risk.

Sincerely,

Sonny Ramaswamy
President

cc: Steven Kurtz, NIC ALO
Greg McKenzie, Chair, NIC Board of Trustees
Matt Freeman, Executive Director, Idaho State Board of Education